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ABSTRACT

Seminars were developed to give francophone students in rural areas intellectual stimulation and experience outside their normal study programs. The aim was to develop French education and to promote French culture for these secondary students. Subject areas were psychology, sociology, and comparative religion. Sixty-one students in grades 10, 11, and 12 from 5 school divisions in Manitoba participated. The seminars were conducted on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. till noon. The participants evaluated the seminars by (1) writing their reactions to the first sessions and (2) completing an evaluation questionnaire after the ninth session. Parents were also given an evaluation questionnaire. The overall student reaction was extremely positive and parents were satisfied. Some of the recommendations were: more dialogue should be included; the seminars should be extended to 1:30 p.m.; local administrations should participate more actively in diffusing information to students; and the project should be continued. (NQ)

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SEMINARS FOR INTERESTED STUDENTS
EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PLANNING AND RESEARCH
JUNE 15, 1973

Translated from

SEMINAIRES POUR ETUDIANTS INTERESSES
PROJET EXPERIMENTAL
MINISTERE DE L'EDUCATION
PLANIFICATION ET RECHERCHE
LE 15 JUIN 1973

Origène Fillion
Co-ordinator
June 15, 1973

RC007134

SATURDAY SEMINARS

Experimental Project

Co-ordinator's report

Last November, Messrs. Olivier Tremblay of the Planning and Research Branch, Department of Education, and Fernand Marion, of the St. Boniface School Division entrusted a project to St. Boniface College. This project was to develop seminars for interested secondary students. The aim was to provide isolated students on opportunity to enrich themselves through a contact with other students.

The project was initiated by an executive, whose members were Fernand Marion, president, Origène Fillion, co-ordinator, and Olivier Tremblay, consultant. Mr. Taib Soufi, moderator and Mr. Marc Lavoie, student, were later added to this executive. This executive met regularly to ensure the progress of the seminars.

The executive is confident that this project was a real success. It therefore submits this report concerning the organization, evaluation and recommendations of the total project. The success of the seminars is due to a large extent to the spirit of co-operation existing between the school divisions, the organizers and the moderators. I wish to emphasize in a special way the constant and efficient participation of Messrs. Tremblay and Marion who assisted me throughout the project.

In concluding, I hope that we will be able to assure a follow-up to the recommendations of this report.

Sincerely,

O.F. Fillion,
Co-ordinator.

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INTRODUCTION

All educators recognize that students must have intellectual stimulations and experiences outside of their normal programs of study to better develop their minds. In this regard, the secondary students in small schools in the rural areas are at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in large city schools. These last students have more opportunity to face intellectual challenges not found in their programs of study.

Consequently, the rural students do not receive the support of the community and of institutions to help them develop their intellectual capacities. They are thus at a disadvantage when compared to urban students. In addition, it is difficult for the school boards or for the schools themselves to organize extracurricular intellectual or socio-cultural activities. The two main reasons for this are the limited number of enrolments at the secondary level, and the lack of financial and human resources on the part of both, the school division and the town itself.

This problem is common to practically all rural, secondary students. However, it is most acute for Francophones. Firstly, the francophone community, apart from living in an English environment, is grouped in more or less small islands of population which isolates it more. Secondly, the Grade 10, 11 and 12 francophone students, with the possible exception of the St. Boniface College students, are not enrolled in an exclusively French program of study. In fact, a small percentage only of these students follow solely a course of "Français" in a school where the environment is predominantly English.

It is almost impossible for a school division with these students to solve by its own means this problem of intellectual and cultural isolation. On the other hand, it is difficult, and not desirable at that, for the Department of Education to try solving this problem without the co-operation and contributions of the school divisions and of the students concerned. It becomes possible to find solutions if there is a joint effort on the part of the school divisions and of the Department of Education.

In this situation, it was necessary to develop a mechanism which ensured the collaboration of the different school divisions concerned and that of the Department of Education.

This problem was discussed at a meeting called on November 6, 1972 by Mr. Olivier Tremblay of the Planning and Research Branch of the Department of Education. The superintendents of five school divisions concerned with this problem attended this meeting, ie., St. Boniface, White Horse, Mountain, Seine River, Red River. Mr. Aimé Delaquis of the "Section française" - Curriculum Branch, Department of Education also attended.

These persons wanted to remedy the situation described above. They based themselves on two previous similar projects : "Catskill Area Project in

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Small School Design" - CAPSSD, and the "Talented Youth Seminar Program in The Texas Small Schools Project" (1).

Mr. Tremblay and Mr. Fernand Marion, Assistant Superintendent, St. Boniface School Division, then asked St. Boniface College (University Section) (University of Manitoba) to collaborate in the project. Following this meeting, Mr. Roger Saint-Denis, rector of the College, designated Mr. Origène Fillion as the College representative on the committee in charge of the project. This collaboration greatly facilitated the carrying out of the project. Effectively, the College assumed the administration and the co-ordination of the experimental project. The participating students could also use the premises and the university library of the College. Finally, the College also assumed responsibility of operating the cafeteria, at a deficit, during the Seminars.

I - EXECUTIVE

Two other members were added to the executive at the beginning of the seminars. One represented the moderators whereas the other represented the students.

Mr. Taib Soufi was chosen by the moderators to be their spokesman in the executive.

Each group of students had chosen one representative at the start of the seminars. These four representatives then choose one, Mr. Marc Lavoie, to be their spokesman in the executive.

This executive met regularly once a week to ensure a constant evaluation of the seminars. With the addition of the two members, Mr. Soufi and Mr. Lavoie, the executive followed closely the unfolding of the project.

The executive was aware of the problems the moderators could possibly encounter. It also knew the students' reactions to the seminars. In this manner, the executive was assured of keeping the pulse of the seminars and thus could better meet the objectives aimed at insofar as possible.

(1) - The appendices of the French report are not translated. They can be found on file at Planning and Research.

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II - THE OBJECTIVES

This program, as mentioned above, dealt with secondary Francophone students of rural areas primarly, isolated culturally and intellectually. The main objectives were to offer an opportunity for these students to meet university professors and to benefit of a university setting.

A few students from St. Boniface were enrolled in the seminars. For these, the problem of intellectual and cultural isolation is less acute than for their rural counterparts. However, when considering the English environment of Winnipeg, we can qualify them of being isolated.

It should be noted that this problem of isolation is not common to the Francophones alone. It applies also to Anglophones living in rural areas. However, the problem is not as serious for Arglophones as for Francophones. This is why the priority was given to the francophone students.

III - THE PROGRAM

Unfortunately, the executive did not have the necessary time to consult the students on the subject matter of the seminars. The executive therefore consulted several interested teachers, and relied once again on the CAPSSD to determine three subject areas which would hopefully interest the students. The subject areas chosen were thus Psychology, Sociology and Comparative Religion.

To assure their financial viability, the seminars required a minimum of 12 students each. In addition, the executive judged that to have good communication and good participation among the students, it was preferable to have a maximum of 15 students per seminar.

Therefore, the executive hoped to receive between 36 and 45 registrations.

IV - PROSPECTUS

The Grade 10, 11 and 12 students of the participating school divisions received a prospectus giving information about the seminars; this prospectus also included a registration form. The way this prospectus was prepared and distributed to the schools is described in a letter, dated November 22, 1972, addressed to each member of the committee in charge of the project.

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V - THE PARTICIPANTS

A total of sixty-one students enrolled in the seminars. They were from five school divisions concerned with the problem, ie., 16 students from Seine River, 19 from Red River, 14 from St. Boniface, 8 from Mountain and 4 from White Horse (1).

On the registration form, the students had to indicate their preference of the three seminars. It was however necessary to add another Psychology seminar due to the unexpected high enrolment. It was also necessary to make certain ajustments in the choice of the seminar, all the while keeping in mind each student's preference. The final choice for each seminar was finally decided at the first session after a discussion with the participants.

VI - THE MODERATORS

The co-ordinator had given information about the seminars to several St. Boniface College Teachers who seemed to be interested in this kind of experience. The co-ordinator then choose four teachers to moderate the seminars :

1. Fernand Lévesque and Taib Soufi : Comparative Religion;
2. Gérald Labossière : Sociology;
3. Jean-Yves Rochon : Psychology.

Another person was then recommended to moderate the extra Psychology seminar. The co-ordinator met Mr. René Derocquigny, a post graduate student in Psychology at the doctorate level at the University of Manitoba who then accepted to moderate the extra seminar.

VII - ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Additional activities were organized to add interest to the seminars and to better meet the aimed objectives.

Two professionals were invited. Mr. Robert Trudel, magistrate, participated in a sociology seminar, while a rabbi had a discussion with the students of the Comparative Religion seminar.

At the last seminar, the Sociology students visited the X-Kalay Rehabilitation Center in St. Norbert. The Comparative Religion students visited the trappist monastery in St. Norbert and then toured a Hutterite

(1) - Norwood School Division was invited to participate at the last minute.

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Colony near Ste. Agathe. The two Psychology seminars viewed and discussed the film "Lady Sings the Blues".

VIII - TRANSPORTATION

The school divisions involved provided the services of a school bus to the participating students during the seminars. The White Horse School Division alone left to the initiative of the students the organization of their transportation. However, three of the four students of this division did not complete this project.

The students often had or wanted to participate to different cultural, sport or other activities of their milieu. Also, others had to work. It was impossible to impose a uniform time of departure from the College since each bus had to go to different towns. The time of departure was decided democratically by the students themselves on the way into the city in the morning. This explains why not all students remained for lunch at the College cafeteria.

IX - COST SHARING

The costs of this project were shared between the school divisions involved and the Department of Education - Planning and Research Branch.

The school divisions paid the registration fee of $25 per student besides providing the school bus transportation where needed. The total cost of the five school divisions amounted to $1,500.

The registration fees were used to pay the professional fees of the moderators. The salary received by each moderator was $35 per seminar.

St. Boniface College (University Section) offered the services of the co-ordinator at no charge. It also opened the cafeteria, normally closed on Saturdays, specifically for these seminars. Thus the students who wished could participate at the lunch-forum organized after each seminar.

The Department of Education - Planning and Research, payed for the printing of the prospectus and of the "Attestation" given to the students. It also offered the services of a consultant for the length of the seminars.

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X - ATTESTATION

Fifty-seven students received the official "Attestation" given to the students who had attended at least 80% of the seminars.

XI - EVALUATION

1. Evaluation of the Seminars by the Students.

The executive wanted to have two evaluations of the seminars by the students.

The first one was held after the fifth session. The students first wrote their reactions to the first five sessions. Messrs. Tremblay and Orlikow then had a discussion with the students.

The overall reaction of the students was extremely positive. They indicated that they made a much better use of their Saturdays through these seminars. They were insisting, however, on augmenting their participation to the discussions in the seminars. This was to avoid the seminars becoming lectures only.

The students also drew up a list of personal objectives that they had at the start of the seminars. This list was used as a pre-test for the second evaluation held towards the end of the project at the ninth session.

Messrs. Marion and Fillion had prepared questionnaire for this second evaluation.

Forty-eight of the sixty-one participants returned the completed questionnaire. This represented an 80% response which was most gratifying. It was no doubt an indication of the high student interest in this project.

Most of the objectives were met : the students knowledge of French was greatly improved; their free time was better spent; these seminars helped them in their personal orientation. We can thus affirm that the problem of cultural and intellectual isolation for rural francophone students was partly solved by the Saturday Seminars.

We noted, however, that one objective was not met to our satisfaction. The students indicated that they did not learn how to discuss and share their opinions as much as they would have desired. Consequently, they did not get to know themselves better. This confirms their reactions to question No. 16, where they indicated that the amount of dialogue in the seminars was not sufficient.

In the future, it would be advisable to warn the moderators about this. They should be aware that the executive wants to assure the maximum

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participation of the students. The moderators should be prepared for the seminars. This would make them better aware of the problem involved.

In short, it is clear that the Saturday Seminars offer one solution to the problem of the cultural and intellectual isolation of the rural francophone students. It should be noted, however, that other ways and means of solving this problem should be explored.

2. Parents' Evaluation of the Seminars.

At the ninth session, students received an evaluation questionnaire prepared by Messrs. Marion and Fillion. This questionnaire had to be given to the parents. Twenty-two of the fifty-five parents returned the completed questionnaire.

They all indicated that their children had benefitted from the seminars. They were satisfied with the methods and the organization of the seminars.

The students had suggested in their evaluation that the seminars be prolonged till 1:30 p.m. On the other hand, sixteen parents found that the present length of the seminars, 10:00 a.m. till noon, was sufficient. They did not want to see the seminars last all day. The main reason given is that the secondary students have a large amount of study, which is done mostly on weekends. The future seminars organizers will have to reconcile these two points of view to determine the length of each session.

3. Evaluation of the organizational structure.

The structure of the mechanism developed this year to organize the seminars was very rewarding from many points of view. However, certain improvements would be desirable. It would be necessary to formalize the relations with the school divisions involved. This would ensure a better diffusion of information on a larger scale; also, it would make for a more active participation on the part of these school divisions. In addition, it would be necessary to establish lines of communications with each of the fourteen school divisions serving a French and English population, even if there are no French schools or classes in the majority of those divisions. Eight of these 14 divisions were not contacted this year. The most isolated francophone students were therefore not reached.

A few improvements would be in order concerning the organization of the seminars themselves. As seen previously, all the objectives were met except for one : the students did not have enough dialogue, either in their own group, or with other groups and therefore did not learn to share their opinions to a desirable degree. The main reason for this was in the time schedule of the seminars. They were held from 10:00 a.m. till noon, The time foreseen for discussion was noon till 1:00 p.m., at the lunch-forum. Since some busses had to leave at noon, some students could not stay for the lunch-forum. They missed therefore this interesting part of the experience.

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In the future, it might be better to use the schedule suggested by the students themselves in their first evaluation. The first part of each session would be held from 10:30 a.m. till noon, lunch from noon till 12:30 p.m., and the second half of the session from 12:30 p.m. till 1:30 p.m. All the students would thus participate in the time foreseen for discussion.

The organizers could prepare a special discussion period in each lengthened session of the seminars. There could be also exchange and dialogue between different seminars. This would surely improve the situation of the isolation of the students. The students would have more opportunities to discuss with the moderators and to meet students from other milieus.

XII - RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is necessary to structure the relations between the different school divisions involved to ensure a better co-operation between them. Also, to facilitate the organization of the project, it is necessary to officialize the relations between the school divisions involved and the executive.

2. The following work schedule should be applied :

- September : formation of executive;
- November : diffusion of necessary information to the school divisions involved;
- December : students' registration forms filled and returned.

It would thus be possible to organize 12 sessions starting in January. It would also be possible to implement the following schedule, as suggested by the students :

10:30 - 12:00 : first part
12:00 - 12:30 : lunch
12:30 - 1 :30 : second part.

3. Local administrations should participate more actively in the diffusion of information to the students. It was noted by the executive that in areas where this was done, the student response was much more favorable.

4. The executive should establish channels of communication with each of the fourteen school divisions serving a French population. Only five were reached and participated this year. However, there are no French schools in a majority of French towns. In that case, other means will have to be found to reach the francophone students, either through the elementary schools, or through organizations of parents. Examples of such towns are St. George, Laurier, St. Lazare, etc.

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One of the foreseen problems evidently is the matter of distance. If the distance is too great, it becomes almost impossible for the students to reach St. Boniface. In this case, it becomes necessary to modify the formula and the organization of the seminars to ensure that the most isolated students have a chance to participate.

6. To structure and formalize the administration of the Saturday Seminars, the following formula should be adopted. The members of the committee in charge would be :

- one representative of the Department of Education,
- one representative of St. Boniface College,
- one representative of the A.C.E.L.F.M., (Association of French School Trustees - Manitoba),
- one representative of the superintendents of school divisions having a Francophone population to serve,
- the project co-ordinator, acting as secretary of this group.

In regards to the cost, an equal cost-sharing formula could be developed and adopted between the Department of Education and the school divisions involved. For example, we could accept a maximum of 100 students next year, January 1974, thus organizing seven different seminars with approximately fifteen students in each. The moderators' professional fees would be $40 per seminar for a total cost of $2,800. The co-ordinator's salary would be on the basis of 1/5 of the salary schedule in force at the university. A university professor could thus receive approximately 1/5 of his salary to assume the responsibilities and to become the co-ordinator of the project. This 1/5 represents a salary varying from $2,000 to $3,000 a year, depending on the qualifications of the professor involved.

The school divisions would assume the cost of the registration fee of each student, while the Department of Education would pay the co-ordinator's salary and the publishing costs of pamphlets, etc.

We suggest that the Planning and Research Branch of the Department of Education assume this responsibility since this project is still experimental in nature. The executive is experimenting a formula to co-ordinate this kind of project at the provincial level.

The executive this year proved the value of the seminars. It now becomes necessary to assure their continuity by establishing an administrative structure for the project. Once this is done, and keeping in account the evolution of the project, another Branch of the Department of Education could assume the responsibility of this project.

If this experimental project is successful for the Francophones, a similar structure could be established for the Anglophones. This could be done on a provincial or a regional scale, using one or more of the English universities.

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Once the seminars are established, their costs could be included in the budgets of both the school divisions involved and the Department of Education. This would assure their continuity.

7. That the proper authorities of the Department of Education take a decision on this matter as soon as possible, to ensure the continuity of the project.

CONCLUSION

This year's experience in the field of seminars for isolated students showed many advantages. This experience should be continued. It is necessary to establish an official administrative structure and to develop channels of communications with the different levels of participants to ensure that this objective be met.

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SUMMARY
JULY 23, 1973

Ronald Bisson

002134

I - THE PROBLEM

All educators realize the fact that all students, and especially secondary students, need intellectual experiences and stimulations which are different from those usually encountered in the regular program of study. These extracurricular experiences and stimulations help the students develop to a larger degree their intellectual capacities and aptitudes.

Urban students constantly have the opportunity to participate in such cultural and intellectual activities because their environment, through cultural centres, theatres, Centennial Halls, Sports Arenas, etc, provides them.

However, rural students are a "have not" group in this respect when compared to their urban counterparts. The main reason for this is that the rural towns, usually small, do not have the financial or human resources needed to offer these cultural services. This problem of cultural and intellectual isolation is common to all rural areas and towns, whether Anglophone, Francophone, or other.

On the other hand, the problem is more acute for Francophone students. The Francophones generally are spread out across the Province in small towns; this isolates them even more and gives them less opportunity to carry out collective cultural activities. More, they live and work in an English milieu, Manitoba, where the English culture is predominant, even in francophone towns. Consequently, the secondary francophone student is isolated culturally and intellectually; he has very little opportunity to participate in cultural activities in his milieu; even his High School, offers no courses in French, except for the "Français course". There is a possible exception at St. Boniface College, which is the only exclusively French High School in the Province. However, taking into account the English environment of Winnipeg, we can also qualify St. Boniface College students as culturally isolated.

II - PROJECT ORGANIZED THIS YEAR TO REMEDY THE SITUATION

It was impossible for a school division to solve this problem on its own. Also, it was impossible and probably not preferable to have the Department of Education solve this problem on its own. Rather, it was necessary to develop a mechanism which would ensure collaboration between the school divisions involved and the Department of Education.

The Planning and Research Branch of the Department of Education therefore offered the services of a consultant working in the field of French education in Manitoba to the superintendents of the following school divisions who serve a French and English population : St. Boniface, Seine River, Red River, Mountain, and White Horse.

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These persons studied reports of two projects held in areas having similar problem, ie., Texas, and Catskill Area. Using these two experiences as a basis, they decided to organize Saturday Seminars for interested francophone students.

The main objective was to help solve the problem of cultural and intellectual isolation encountered by secondary francophone students from rural and even urban areas. To do this, the students needed an opportunity to meet other students, to discuss with them, to exchange ideas and to participate in cultural activities. The second objective was to use a francophone university along the lines of the University serving the Community to help solve one particular problem of the francophone population. To this end the seminars were held at St. Boniface College (University Section).

There were ten sessions from January till April. The sixty-one students, divided into four groups, participated in the following seminars : Sociology, Comparative Religion, and two seminars in Psychology.

It is important to note that the seminars were organized on a democratic basis. The students choose the seminar in which they wanted to participate; also, the students from the same school division decided the departure time of their school bus from the College; they also decided which subject would be discussed at the lunch-forum, etc. This procedure is evidently favourable, since fifty-seven of the sixty-one students attended at least 80% of the sessions.

III - EVALUATION OF THE EXPERIENCE AND CONCLUSION DERIVED THEREFORE

There were many interesting aspects to this experiment whose aim was to develop French education and to promote French culture for francophone secondary students.

First of all, it allowed the establishment of contacts, channels of communications, a cooperation and a collaboration, on one hand between the Department of Education and a francophone university and on the other, between five school divisions serving a French and English population and the same francophone university. This action helped solidify the bonds between the five schools divisions, the francophone university and the Department of Education, the last being the organization which can offer the support and the leadership required in this kind of project.

One of the most positive elements in this project was the fact that St. Boniface College, by using human and financial resource from outside the College, really served the whole francophone community. This experience therefore allowed the cementing of bonds between a francophone institution and some Francophones of the Province; this is essential. Unfortunately, only five of the fourteen school divisions having

a francophone population participated this year. Efforts will be needed in the future to assure that all francophone students, from each school division in the Province, have the opportunity to participate in the project.

The persons involved found this experience very valid, worthy and rewarding. One major conclusion can be derived from the experience. This year's experience in the field of seminars for isolated students showed many advantages. This experience should be continued. It is necessary to establish an official administrative structure and to develop channels of communications with the different levels of participants to ensure that this objective be met.